

**AN ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY BASED RADIO PRACTICE IN BAUCHI STATE:
CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN
RURAL NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The Bauchi State government in North Eastern Nigeria has established and been maintaining the largest radio network in the country with eleven affiliate FM stations across the state under the mother station, Bauchi Radio Corporation (BRC). Almost three years on with the establishment of what is preferably termed in academic circle as Community Based Radio, this paper presents findings of an audience assessment study into the performance of the Bununu Community Based Radio station. The study was conducted within the framework of Development Media Theory, and adopted case study design to analyse broadcast schedule, interview the station manager and administered structured questionnaire to clustered sample of 100 respondents among the Bununu community. The study found that, although not a full community medium, the community based radio initiative of the government has been doing adequately well in addressing community issues; the people's rating of the station has been equally fairly good. However, it was obvious that cost of running the stations is becoming heavy on government; and although there are avenues created in the broadcast schedule for community participation, mostly in presentation, listeners rarely participate in phone-ins or text-ins, which could be attributed to either their non involvement in initiating and packaging of programmes, or the level of poverty and illiteracy in the rural areas. Consequent upon that, programmes managers in those stations should do more to persuade listeners to take part in all the stages of programming. Also, the government might think of leasing the ownership and control of these stations to their host communities gradually in years to come, so as to make them fully fledged community broadcast outfits, controlled and managed by the communities themselves.

Keywords: *Community, Broadcasting, Audience, Assessment, Bununu*

Introduction

The history of broadcasting in Nigeria could be traced back to 1932 when the empire service of The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) started broadcasting services in Nigeria through a diffusion system that was called Radio Diffusion Services (RDS). The system was used largely by the colonial masters to consolidate their colonial powers and to seize economic advantages. After the establishment of the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation in 1957, was established as an

independent institution designed to be neutral to existing political forces. “In practice, that dream was never realized; it was more of linguistic semantics as operated by the policy makers” (Kolo, 2009:2). Several decades after the DRS, broadcasting has remained the prerogative of governments (Regional States and Federal) until 1992, when the then military administration promulgated the National Broadcasting Commission Decree N0.38 which deregulated the broadcast industry in Nigeria. Before then, the federal regional and state governments exclusively owned, controlled and operated broadcasting in Nigeria (Media Rights Agenda [MRA] and Article 19, 2001:7). Private and community ownership of broadcast outfits was guaranteed by that decree, as amended by Decree 55 of 1999.

The deregulation has thus empowered the people to harness the need for community media forms and contents with the chief goal of creating the feeling of connecting to the locality among community members, in order to ward off the threats of domination by mainstream global and urban media. According to Howley (2005:30), “locally oriented, participatory media organizations are at once a response to the encroachment of the global upon the local as well as an assertion of the local cultural identities and socio-political autonomy in the light of the global forces.” Howley’s assertion has highlighted the issue behind the much-talked-about South-North dialogue – the need to enhance bottom-top communication model as against the top-bottom model, which has been widely criticized as not adequately representative of public interest in especially developing countries. On this backdrop, as Meadows et al (2007) have argued, there rise the growth of community media and increasing attention given to them. They argued that since the media represent culture, different communities should participate in owning and controlling it so that members could learn to coexist communally among themselves, and between them and others.

Although there have been various attempts at establishing what could be seen as community radio in Nigeria, we have not yet had a truly community inspired radio broadcasting outfit. In Bauchi State for instance, FM radio stations with affiliation to the major radio broadcaster in the state, the BRC, have been established by the state government in eleven local government areas. These are arguably best referred to as ‘Community-Based Radio’, because they were born out of an exclusively government policy, than any community effort. What is however unclear, or even unknown empirically, is how the people for whom these stations are meant perceive, rate the performance of the stations, and whether or not they participate in the different levels of programme conception, packaging and presentation. This study was set out to do just that.

Statement of Problem

It has been about three years after the establishment of Community-based radio stations across different local government areas in Bauchi state. However, little is known of much the stations have been fairing so far. How much do the audiences appreciate of performance of these Community Based radios. Are they operating the within the framework of how a real community radio ought to, leading their broadcast communities to addressing their socio-economic,

environmental and political problems; or are the stations just functioning as extension political power, puppeting the interest of the government of the day; or a media for relating the rural communities of the happenings in the city, thereby serving not the interest of the for whom they are meant, but that of the city dwellers their life style. Oso (2002) has accused the big urban media of overbearing coverage of the big cities, political news, the government and its officials (as major newsmakers), adding that their content mainly appeals to the urban dwellers, but irrelevant to those living in the rural areas.

In addition, establishing and maintaining a community based radio is quite tasking considering the high level of capital required in purchasing broadcast equipment, staffing and solving the incessant power outages in the country at large, with worst case scenario in the rural areas. There is thus need to justify the huge resources that has been and is skill being sunk in these stations through empirical study. There stems the need to evaluate the importance of these stations and to assess its performance over the years through their audiences.

Aim and Objectives

The study aims to assess the performance of the Community-based radio practice as a policy initiated and implemented by the Bauchi State government, taking a case study of the Bununu FM (89.9MHz) radio station. To achieve this, the following specific objectives are set forth:

1. To ascertain the level of coverage of rural areas/issues by the Bununu FM station;
2. To determine the likes and dislikes of the audience in the programmes of the Bununu Community Based Radio;
3. To determine the level of community participation in the Bununu Community Based Radio programmes;
4. To assess the performance of the Bununu Community Based Radio station through its audiences.

Research Questions

RQ1 How do audiences assess the performance of the Bununu Community-based Radio?

RQ2 What are the likes and dislikes of audience about the programmes of the Bununu Community Based Radio?

RQ3 Is the Bununu community based radio participatory?

RQ4 Does the Community-based Radio in Bununu cover rural areas and issues adequately?

Relevant Literature

Community Broadcasting: History Objectives, Principles and Strategies

While there is conflicting historical evidence as to the origin of community radio, it is widely acknowledged that the first community radio was established in Bolivia in 1947 during Tin miners' strike, and in Colombia in the same year under the name Radio Sutatenza/ Accion cultural popular. While in Bolivia the aim of community radio was to fight for better working conditions for miners, in Colombia it was to support peasants (UNESCO, 2002),

For instance, Egargo (2008) believes that a well organized community radio can be essential tool for self realization and transformation of the locals by themselves. He further outlined specific objectives a typical community radio can pursue to include: (1) mobilize community members to define their problem and reach consensus on what concerted actions should be taken to solve them; (2) help pacify the community whenever conflicts crop up, stressing the importance of peace and unity; (3) enable community members to tackle problem by working collectively such as family planning, civic education, female circumcision, sanitation and modern agricultural technology campaign (Egargo 2008).”

Anaeto and Anaeto (2010:151) have outlined some four principles upon which community broadcasting could be built for it to stand the taste of time and grow stronger: (i) Start where people are; (ii) Ensure maximum participation of the people being served; (iii) Be sensitive to local contextual and cultural issues; (iv) Base programs on real issues which are important.

Positioning Community broadcasting for Nigeria’s Development

The success of community radio in enhancing national development is what Moemeka (1999) describes as their ability and willingness to create for the rural population access to the media and to induce the people participation in the communication process and involvement in the development efforts. The communities’ ability to access the media is by extension their ability to take part in public affairs. Communication is a major tool in influencing the behavior of others. Communication for development cuts across the different sectors in the country and is more successful when the government and the media work in unison to achieve established beneficial goals. Marshall (cited in McMillan & Chavis, 1986) found out that decentralization is more easily achieved using local institutions.

Oso et al (2012) identified indicators of national development to include: Political stability, education, socio cultural changes, economic growth and administrative mechanism. These indicators find expressions in the traditional functions of radio (educating, informing, entertaining and being the society’s watch dog). Community radio can make significant impact to national development in the following ways:

i. Creating political stability; Community radio can strengthen grassroot democracy by allowing long neglected people to have a say in the decisions that shape their lives and affect their collective destiny. Momoh (2000) says that the press is the direct medium for identifying and determining and sustaining national interest and keeping it alive. Community based radio will probe into the more sensitive areas. Local authorities and officials can be regularly interviewed on their activities. If stability is to be guaranteed at the national level, the foundation of a national government must be firmed up at the local levels.

ii. Education: Community radio systematically instruct their audience on new knowledge and skills to build up their capacities. Oso (2002) notes that the media are great teachers and mobilizers for change. Community based radio help teach the rural dwellers new techniques. Prior to elections Udejah (2003) asserts that the media help in providing background information about aspirants. This enables citizens to have background knowledge of the intending leaders and their ambitions on development.

iii. Socio cultural changes: Community radio will trigger off social changes by promoting a higher level of sensitivity and social mobilization through spoken word. The traditional man is averse to innovations. Community radio persuades against discrimination, injustice, superstition but campaign for improved farming methods, friendly use of environment and elimination of social ills and illusion. Oso et al (2012) submits that sociocultural changes will lead to the fulfillment of individual, mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

iv. Economic growth: Community radio fosters economic growth. Udejah (2003:461) opines that the media “monitors trends and development in production process ; promotes knowledge of available products and services through programmes and advertisement; it fosters the spirit of hard work and productivity to improve the quality of life of people; and encourage the production and consumption of local products to achieve self sufficiency and self reliance”. It is in line with this and more that community radio help in economic development of many rural areas.

Theoretical Framework

This study has been conceptualized within the framework of the Development Media Theory, propounded by Denis Mc Quails in 1987. The principles upon which the theory is premised as given by Mc Quail (1987:121) are as follows:

- a. Media must accept and carryout positive development tasks in line with established national policy;
- b. Freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society;
- c. Media should give priority in news and information that links with other developing countries which are close geographically, culturally or politically;
- d. Journalists and other media workers have the responsibility as well as the freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks;
- e. In the interest of development ends, the state has the right to intervene or restrict media operations and devices and direct control can be justified.

This theory provides framework for the current study because the basic tenets can only be actualized if there were functional community media which champion the overall goal of development, which is the chief concern of developing countries around the world. The principles highlighted above can be used by community broadcast managers as blueprint or manual for conducting their activities.

Methodology

Creswell and Clark (2011:3) observed that a mixed method is “a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches in the methodology of a study”. The mixed method is adopted here because of the exploratory stage of research into the community based radio practice, particularly in Bauchi State. There was thus need for both the qualitative and quantitative data to facilitate

more informed and in-depth analysis of issues under study. Following from the above, the Broadcast Schedule of the Bununu FM station has been analysed against the objectives of the study. Also, an interview was conducted with the station's manager in order that the researcher learn the management's point of view as to whether or not the set objectives of establishing the station were being achieved, besides analysis of other documentary sources obtained within and outside the station.

Based on the information obtained from the sources aforementioned, a structured questionnaire was constructed and administered to a sample of one hundred respondents (100), selected through a cluster sampling technique applied on the people of Bununu community, the administrative capital of Tafawa Balewa Local Government. Qualitative data was presented and analysed thematically in narrative form, while quantitative data collected via the questionnaire was presented in simple frequency tables and analysed quantitatively. Reliability and validity of instrument was guaranteed by a senior colleague at the Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.

Findings and Discussion

The findings are discussed in line with the research questions set forth at the inception of the study:

RQ1 How do audiences assess the performance of the Bununu Community-based Radio?

RQ2 What are the likes and dislikes of audience about the programmes of the Bununu Community Based Radio?

RQ3 Is the Bununu community based radio participatory?

RQ4 Does the Community-based Radio in Bununu cover rural areas and issues adequately?

Result of Content Analysis of Bununu Community-Based Radio Programmes Schedule

The Bununu Community-Based Radio programmes schedule indicates that the station commences broadcast everyday at 07:00HRS and closes its broadcast for the day at 20:00HRS. This is a total of thirteen hours broadcast every day. The number of items on the programme for each day ranges from 34 to 35. The programme schedule of the station is in line with the National Communication Policy. Anaeto and Anaeto (2010:33) identifies that the Nigerian Communication Policy "stipulates that the electronic media station shall allocate at least 20 percent of their programmes to rural programming, while community-based media shall allocate 80 percent of their programmes to their immediate localities."

The study has found that there were a good number of programmes meant for the immediate locality. These programmes include 'Akoma Gona' 'Mu Shakata.' There are other programmes that promote indigenous languages of the Bununu/Tafawa Balewa people. These programmes include 'Fulfulde News', 'Jaar News,' 'Reta Sa'a Fulbe,' etc. other programmes at 07: 00HRS the station begins the day with 'Station Call,' 'Station Identification,' 'National Anthem' and 'Opening Prayer.' These help to sensitize the citizens on National Unity and keep them in touch with National coloration/content.

In timing, 'Zaben Safe' and 'Zaben Rana' (both radio request programmes) go on air every day, which serve dual function of social integration and entertainment. The agricultural programme 'Akoma Gona' goes on air every Wednesday 11: 30HRS and repeated on Sundays by 13: 30HRS. However, the placement of this agricultural programme is mostly when Farmers are on the farm or at work. It is possible that most farmers double up as businessmen and civil servants.

Analysis of the Interview with the Station's Manager, Haruna Adamu

Findings from the interview conducted with the station's manager were presented under themes that emerged from the interview and in line with the objectives of the study. The findings were related with scholarly and conventional principles and practices of community broadcasting.

Objectives of Establishing the Station

The manager noted that unlike conventional broadcast, the Bununu FM radio station was established basically for the grassroot people of the Tafawa Balewa Local Government "the objective of the Bauchi State government for establishing those ten community-based stations is to give or disseminate information to the grassroot by educating, informing, entertaining and enlightening.' These objectives concur with Anaeto and Anaeto's (2010) concerns of development. According to Anaeto and Anaeto (2010), the concerns of development include eradicating Ignorance and illiteracy among others, and that is the basic concern of development communication.

Languages Used for Broadcast

Language is a basic factor in broadcasting. To ensure adequate audience follow-up and participation, all the major languages spoken in a locality should be used in the broadcast of programmes, especially if the broadcast medium is a community based radio station. In the Bununu FM station, all the languages spoken in the locality are used for broadcast: "we use Hausa language, Jarawa language, Sayawa language, Fulani language and the English language. A total of six languages." The reason he cited was to get to the grassroot people. He noted that apart from the aforementioned languages, no other language was spoken in the area.

Level of Participation

Generally, participation is a key term in mass communication/broadcasting and a more indispensable tool in community based radio. Media scholars such as Gomez (1983), Anaeto and Anaeto (2010) all hinted on the need for participation in community broadcasting. Ojebode (2002) holds that community broadcasting is based on the need to Liberalise access to broadcasting, not only with regards to reception but also with regard to transmission. What this means is that community members are to take part in the packaging and reception of audio.

Haruna Adamu Yusuf, the station's manager said "that is the essence of the Bununu Community based Radio station.

However, the manager decried poor level of sponsorship, when asked about the level of sponsorship, he said " we hardly get indigenous people to sponsor our programmes. The only time we had indigenous people sponsoring a programme(s) was during the Ramadan, the people sponsored Tafsir."

Challenges

AMARC (2007) identified lack of proper enabling legislature, financial and technological sustainability as challenges of community radio organizations. The f Bununu Radio has been facing these challenges since inception, added with others like inadequate staff, lack of or inadequate professionalism among the few staff available. Haruna Yusuf decried that "the major challenges we are facing, are two: First, Professionalism. We lack professional staff while the second serious challenge is inadequate fund"

Proposed solution to the challenges

In his own professional opinion, Haruna Adamu believes that "In the area of inadequate funds, we solicit the support and cooperation of the community by sponsoring programmes, bringing in pay announcement and other varied supports." In the area of Professionalism, the manager called for partnership in tackling the problem "the mother station, BRC should come in to train and re-train our staff. Also, academic tertiary institutions like the Federal Polytechnic Bauchi or the State Polytechnic should take one or two staff of the station for training"

Analysis of survey of Questionnaire

One hundred (100) questionnaires was administered to randomly selected sample and the same number retrieved because it was self-administered by the researcher.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The respondents were sampled from the Bununu community; they are characterized into students (35%) civil servants (31%), traders (10%) farmers (22%) and others (2%). They fall within the age brackets: 18-30 (69%), 31-50 (26%), 50 and above (5%).their level of educational attainment ranges from primary (20%), secondary (40%), tertiary (29%) Islamic education (10%) and others (1%). 65 percent was males while 35 percent was female.

From the level of Education above, 20% of the respondents had primary education as their highest attainment. Secondary constituted 40%, Tertiary 29%, Islamic 10%, others 1%. It was found that 55 percent of the sample get information through the radio, about one third depend on television and only 12 percent read newspapers. This fact is reflective of a rural population, which is mostly poor to afford television and mostly illiterate to read newspapers and other print periodicals.

Table 1: Respondents' Preferences for Programmes Genres

Variables	News	Agric	Politics	Culture	Entert.	Others	Total
Freq.	5	27	20	15	30	3	100
%	5	27	20	15	30	3	100

The table above depicts that respondents like listening most to entertainment programmes, followed by agriculture and politics. Only a negligible 5% enjoy news programmes. Respondents' preference for entertainment may not be unconnected with turbulent nature of the Nigerian polity, people need consolation from poverty, unemployment and civil unrest.

Table 2: Respondents Views on Favorability or Otherwise of Time and Duration of Programmes

Variable	Timing of Program		Duration of program		Quality of Signals	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Good	88
Yes	65	65	80	80	Fair	10
No	35	35	20	20	Poor	2
Total	100	100	100	100	Total	100

Listeners of the Bununu Community Based Radio as sampled in this study are largely satisfied with the timing and duration of time allotted to various programmes on the station. They adjudged the quality of signal reception as good. However, a considerable number (35% and 20%) does not agree with the timing and duration of the programmes. This is probably so because the common practice among media managers and producers is they would hardly conduct any audience survey to determine preferences before mounting a programme.

Table 3: Respondents' Assessment of the Performance of Bununu Community Based Radio Station

	Variables						Total
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	No Idea	
Freq.	2	27	41	15	3	12	100
%	2	27	41	15	3	12	100

Audience perception and assessment of the performance of the Bununu Community Based Radio could be described and favourable as 70% of the respondents have scored it between excellent and good as shown above. Just a negligible 3% rated the station poor in performance, while another 12% who have no idea how to rate the station's performance, or do not care.

Table 4: Respondents' Participation Though Phone-in/Text-in and Sponsoring of Programmes of Bununu Community Based Radio

Variate	Phone-in/Text-in		Sponsorship		Awareness		%
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Yes	90	
Yes	21	21	5	5	No	2	2
No	79	79	95	95	No Idea	8	8
Total	100	100	100	100	Total	100	100

Although the audience of the station is well aware (90%) of the opportunities that abound for participating in programmes, they seldom do so as the table above has depicted. Only 21% of the respondents had ever cared to call in, sent text message to contribute to a programme. The scenario is even more daunting where only 2% of the respondents had agreed to have ever sponsored a programme. The results here seem not to agree with the aforementioned disposition of the people to the services of the station. One would think that an audience that likes a station would strive to support it through various ways, including participation in the ways identified above. What could however explain this evident lack of correlation is the economic status of the listeners; rural dwellers could so much poor that they hardly secure daily living, not much of sponsoring a radio programme or bearing the cost of making calls or sending texts. One other explanation, albeit in addition to those highlighted, is that most people in Nigeria believe that government alone should be left to man the affairs of all its institutions; so, based on this belief, audience may be adamant to contribute, since government can afford it.

Conclusion

Findings from this study has revealed that the people of Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro Local Government areas, and probably all the other 20 local government areas in Bauchi State for whom community based radio stations were established, have to a graeter extent, approved of the performance of the station(s) – the chief aim of conducting the study. Programmes have been found to largely reflect the realities of the host communities, and are adequately encompassing of the major developmental needs of the people in the areas of education, health care, sociopolitical enlightenment, promotion of economic activities, resolution of conflicts and disputes, and lots more.

The community based radio practice has seem to go down well with the people and the managers in the part of government, but as the qualitative and quantitative data analysed priori has shown, much is left to be desired of community commitment to the sustainability of the system. It has been identified that the success of community broadcasting is measured more in the level of audience participation, not only in the listenership or viewership, but equally in the packaging of messages and sponsorship of programme. (see literature above)

On a general note however, the introduction of the community based radio system in Bauchi State could be seen for the most part to be positive judging from responses of listeners, qualitative interview and analysis of broadcast schedule contained in this report. Following from this, the identifiable challenges that are beginning to emerge include that of sustainability of the

stations considering the huge monetary implication involve in running them. The following are recommended for a better future for the stations, and may be a model for other states:

Recommendations

- i- A wider audience survey needs to be undertaken to ascertain the actual reasons and possible motivations or lack of it of why listeners do not sponsor programmes and/or advertise often on the community based radio stations across the state. If this problem is reversed, a lot of challenges regarding funding would have been addressed.
- ii- Station managers, along with producers should identify and adopt new ways of persuading the communities to consider the stations as their communal property which they need to guard jealously. This would improve on participation.
- iii- The state government through its orientation and information functionaries should engage on a planned awareness campaign on the need and significance of community broadcasting. This would be precursor to a leasing process that would gradually lead to the transfer of ownership and control of the community based radio stations to the hands of the communities, where they could fully function as community radios.
- iv- Government should liaise with journalism training institutions to train community members whom would later be employed to for their communities' stations. This way the community feels more possessive of the stations as they would reflect their experiences in a manner most appealing as the broadcasters are 'sons of the soil.'
- v- A forum should be created for community-station parley where managers and staff of the stations meet community leaders and other members of the community and exchange views on how best the station can be sustained and be more impactful. This could come in form of end of year anniversaries, dinner and gala nights and events of the sort.

Limitations

The survey sample used might not have been representative of the population; this therefore limits the findings to only the case studied as the thrust of the investigation was mainly exploratory than a study for making generalizations. It has however provided impetus and insight into the problem, to facilitate large scale, more structured wide survey in future.

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